Editorial:
The Paradoxes of Un(becoming)

jan jagodzinski /Bill Wightman

Un(becoming) is one of those adjectival words in the Merriam-Webster dictionary that holds the tension of its own contradiction. Its synonyms seem to summon an endless array of descriptive abjections: unsuitable, unflattering, unappealing, undesirable, unfitting, out of place, unfit, tasteless, malapropos, unseemly, indecorous, inappropriate, unsuitable. We need not go on to get the point. Becoming, on the other hand, appears entirely positive. It denotes well chosen, tasteful, presentable, welcoming, excellent, graceful, acceptable, agreeable, attractive, effective, and so on; in short, all that which is familiar, acceptable and beautiful. Un(becoming) is, therefore, purposefully presented as a portmanteau word containing the word (becoming), which always gains legitimacy in education through forms of transformation and growth toward some progressive end. It is the very tension, the ambiguity of transformation between these two positions that make it pregnant for creative deconstruction.

Freud (1919/1955) identified a similar word that conceals its own secret—*unheimlich*, literally meaning "un-home-like" or unfamiliar. Often it is translated as "uncanny," meaning frightening, eerie, sinister, all synonyms that could just as well point to un(becoming). What was strange and uncanny (*unheimlich*) dwelled within what seemed very much at home (*Heim*) and "natural" or native (*heimisch*). The adjective *heimlich* in German also means something secretive and clandestine. The uncanny that dwells at the very heart/ or hearth of the home was

not to be revealed. Freud made the point that when this happened, an uncanny experience occurred. What had been familiar suddenly appeared inexplicably strange and alien, the perceiver was shocked by the revelation. There was a return of the repressed for what we perceive often represses what we do not wish to see. Un(becoming) is also such a word.

The twenty-fifth anniversary issue explores the paradoxes that surround the ambiguity and tensions of this word for art and art education, where the golden middle—the balance—that is so often called on for some sort of organic unity is vacated. When confronted with un(becoming) we must squarely face ambiguity and paradox, which an instrumental approach to education tries to eliminate. Organic wholeness, non-exclusion, harmony, androgyny, are those sorts of platitudes that emerge when the "secret" of un(becoming), its bold faced problematic of abjection, marginalization, and ugliness are faced and thought about. Un(becoming) points to what "sticks out like a sore thumb," a place of suffering, an extremity that exists in pain. Such suffering could be a failure of recognition, it may well be outright rejection by structures that may or *may not* be apparent. Un(becoming) has also the connotation of an aesthetics of ugliness, which raises all sorts of issues as to who and what objects in art education are invested with an aestheticized "becoming." Something "sticks out "again, but this time it is not ignored and abjected, as much as it is hated for its possible effects of ruination. Something ugly intervenes into the pristine beauty of the accepted picture. To be fanciful, an ugly toad like Shriek wins the hand of a princess who is really a "grrrl;" she is willing to face the ugliness of her own Being to create a chance for their momentary happiness.

Un(becoming) has in it the portmanteau word "becoming" and here we can play with the notion of something that has yet to come out, has yet to appear, has yet to emerge. What rests within the *habitus*

of art education that could be given other "lines of flight" to follow Deleuze? Deleuze and Guattari's important concept of "becoming woman" is significant here. It is, after all, the first quantum, or molecular segment because woman's identification is absent. This same term paradoxically refers to a nomadic or itinerant machinic vector or force, a "middle-line" *in-between* a system (logos) and its dissipation—in-between, in their terms, molar and molecular lines of flight—in-between order and chaos, the proviso being that such a "quanta" of energy can "cause" a collapse back into order (molar state of closure) or offer new potentialities.   What waits to be written and "recognized" for its potential impact on our field?

Finally, but not exhaustively, the notion of un(becoming)'s inverse is possible as well. What has to be "undone" within art education itself so that new "becomings" can emerge? Un(becoming) therefore can be interpreted as an unraveling, an un-knotting, or de-framing, dropping and opening up structures that too long have held the parenthesis of (becoming) hostage. The complexity of un(becoming) has opened up new vistas and imaginings for the authors of our quarter century journal. It is a theme that is quite rich in its implications for transformative change and justice that the social caucus stands behind.

The essays in this year's collection have risen to the occasion and met the challenge of un(becoming)'s problematic. Where possible we have taken the author's abstracts so that their contents are represented more accurately. The first section, *The Un(becoming) in Us*, is highly autobiographical, a bold attempt to recognize what Julia Kristeva meant by coming to terms with the "stranger in us." Such an approach presents us with the first paradox of un(becoming): the realization that there is no separation between object and subject; that positions where difference is still treated as benevolent "tolerance" continue to separate the subject from its object. By asking that we come to terms with the

difference that already dwells in us we find ourselves in transformative territories that leave behind any simple psychologies of the subject. The blurring of the inside and outside, what Jacques Lacan called "extimate" space, is well represented by the three essays and the images that open this section by Kevin Tavin's provocation on identity as a charting of growth. Anniina Suominen's addresses this question by directly drawing on Kristeva through her title: "Stranger Within." The title has even further reverberations when the definitive article is missing. It provides the possibility of self discovery that "becomes" ever more stranger "within" as she explores and unfolds her narrative. So here we have the tension of becoming and unbecoming creatively being explored. Suominen boldly attempts to name and articulate the suppressed aspects of her Finnish culture so that difference can be grasped where it lies: as a relationship of transference. She provides directions for a critical pedagogy that incorporates these insights.

A rather heart wrenching and emotional essay follows as Ed Check attempts to interrogate the signifier of what is means to be "working class" when one achieves a position in the academy that bestows privilege and cultural capital, which then makes the tension between becoming and un(becoming) equally paradoxical. Check faces this dilemma squarely, attempting to explore the meaning of this signifier through his own art based on working class themes, and through mentoring students with working class backgrounds. As he told us, writing this essay was painfully difficult as he interrogated questions about himself, which are easily repressed and dismissed.

Ed Check's activism as an outed gay is well-known and admired by Caucus members. Hence it only seems appropriate that his essay be followed by the many active voices who have contributed to a self examination of their self-definition as LGBTIC (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Issues Caucus) to change to the possibility of what some feel to be the more inclusive term "Queer Issues Caucus." In their essay, "(Un)Becoming Queer/(Un)Becoming LGBTIC" the tension

seems to be between two lines of flight for "becoming." The parenthesis surrounding the (Un) indicate that the quarrel over a signifier for self-definition: who owns it, who becomes excluded, who benefits, whose voice becomes masked, and so on. This is always a necessary but painful experience. The different perspective voices indicate the libidinal attachments any signifier has, and the question of mourning and healing that would be necessary to let it go, to suffer the loss of identity should the Caucus change its name, is hauntingly present.

On an equal journey of self-discovery of a stranger within is the last essay in this section by Tamara Katz. Here the signifier that is struggled with is her being /White/. In "Unbecoming White: Exposing Power and Privilege Within My Own Eurocentric Education," Katz poignantly summarizes her essay as follows. "I have chosen to contextualize this social phenomenon through my writing by deconstructing my own complicity with racism throughout my life. By writing about my own imbedded and conditioned racism, I am exposing myself as an example. In order to become aware of the power and privileges of whiteness and begin the process of developing one's own positive racial identity, it is important to deconstruct one's education. Most of us in America have been educated through this Eurocentric based education. To undo the conditioning and belief system based on this, we must rethink and relearn the truth and find an unbiased and objective view of our history. I hope the process I have gone through will serve as pedagogy in itself for others." While "an unbiased and objective view of our history" may be impossible, it is this very interrogation of "whiteness" that she initiates which helps to destabalize its libidinal hold over her.

The next section we have entitled *Un(becoming) the Self and Other*. Closely aligned with the previous section, the two essays here dwell more on the Other, not autobiographically as with the previous authors,

but with an equal recognition of the extimate space that makes for the paradox of becoming and un(becoming) possible. Sharon Chappell's essay, "Toward Art-Making as Liberatory Pedagogy and Practice: Artists and Students in an Anti-bullying School Reform Initiative," addresses the question of social aggression (bullying, gossiping, alliance/club forming) in elementary grade school and what processes specific to art-making can artists-in-residence utilize to address this? As she writes in her abstract "In the paper, I investigate this reform effort using the following questions: what are the conditions that define pedagogy as liberatory? What are the constraints and possibilities of art-making with youth as liberatory practice? How does the ideological framework of the school institution affect artists' practice and their conceptualization of their own pedagogical role? What are the dangers and benefits of the working toward social reform through the arts in schools?" Chappell points out that a certain disavowal goes in these explorative classes despite the attempt to get at the root causes of such behavior through an artistic venue. The expressive output, however, was on victimhood with no claim to subjective acts of aggression. Through the work of drama educators such as Augusto Boal (e.g., *The Rainbow of Desire*) who specifically attempt to address the root cause of such behavior through a theatrical encounter where desire is confronted and the libidinal attachment to the Other comes out in the open, the possibility of transformative liberatory education remains alive.

Carrie Markello's essay, "Visual Culture and Teenage Girls: Unraveling 'Cultural' Threads Tied to 'Self' and 'Other'" explores the way the complex relationship between the visual and the cultural come together when it comes to young women's concepts of their body image. Although this is a well-trodden territory, the body being a postmodern trope of the highest order, Markello refuses to make a simple and easy causal connection between media influences and women's bodily images. Paradox and ambiguity are reinstated into this equation by

recognizing the complexity of identity. And, while no "solutions" are offered as such, it is to Markello's credit to provide the reader with an understanding of that complexity. Visual culture remains, then, one of the key theoretical challenges for the Social Caucus Theory.

In our third section, *The Un(becoming) Aesthetic*, opens with an artistic statement with images by Debora Smith-Shank. This is a fitting opening to a section that explores an "ugly" aesthetic; ugly in the paradoxical sense that un(becoming) puts on the table. What is shit or waste to one person is gold to another. The investment of libidinal value can change on a dime. So what are sublime moments of pleasure for President Bush as he watched the images of bombs exploding in Baghdad as Saddam Hussein's Palace was being destroyed, was absolute terror for those citizens on the ground who heard the explosions, and fled for their lives. Many did not make, so many that the silence over the number of civilians killed during the glorious short war has yet to be revealed with any sort of certainty. Smith-Shank's artistic statement needs no comment. Hers is a cathartic experience, an "ugly" reaction to the war on Iraq. It is fitting therefore that her images be followed by more "ugly" images, unfortunately calling upon that stereotype that was almost forgotten, "the ugly American." Meant more as a derisive term for the tourist who demands a replica of his or her own culture, condemning all that is different and Other, Nancy Pauly's essay on "Abu Ghraib's (Un)becoming Photographs: How Can Art Educators Address Current Images From Visual Cultural Perspectives?" provides a stunning example of visual cultural research to expose this hypocrisy. Her words, taken from her abstract, speak succinctly to what is at stake in such a smug aesthetic. "The vivid Abu Ghraib prison photographs became the visual culture fulcrum for an international media event that provoked discussion, outrage, and action in May of 2004. As an art educator, teacher educator, and human rights advocate,

I reacted strongly to the images and made connections to other experiences, thoughts, memories, histories, and feelings during this media event. Upon reflection I asked myself, if art teachers wanted to address these photographs, or other photographs in the news, from visual culture perspectives, what theories or questions would I recommend to guide them and their students? Then, what suggestions could I offer for making art?"

To live up to this promise she further writes: "This article aims to explore the multiple ways that teachers and students might investigate, analyze and interpret images in the mass media from visual culture perspectives, such as the images photographed at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq in 2003. First, Abu Ghraib photographs are explored from diverse approaches as advocated by visual culture scholars using key concepts such as: representation, power/knowledge/truth, image, cultural narratives, and intertextual articulation. Next, the author explores her own reactions to experiencing the media event surrounding the Abu Ghraib photographs and discusses a collage she made in response another tragic event. Finally, suggestions are given about how teachers could investigate these images with students from visual culture perspectives and how students might respond to popular media culture through creative works using collage and assemblage."

As a change of direction, but equally dwelling on the "ugly" aesthetic Kathleen Keys presents the reader with the paradoxes that surround community pedagogy through four separate but nevertheless related incidents that took place at Boise State University. The first was a quarrel over the removal of a certain "statue," the Kaikoo sculpture from the universities quad. In the second incident, Keys identifies the many benefits that a First Nations artist, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith brought to the campus by utilizing a community pedagogical approach through her lectures and art. The third incident describes Keys' indignation towards the crass politicization that went on during the

university's Governor's Awards in the Arts, a community event gone astray. Lastly, she reflects on an exhibition, The Vanishing: Re-presenting the Chinese in Idaho, a community project with redeeming feature of recovering the traces of memory of Chinese immigrants who helped develop and settle Idaho. She concludes her essay, "Community Pedagogy in Idaho," with a guideline as to how such community pedagogy in the Idaho arts community might be further promulgated.

The two essays in the next section, *The Un(becoming) Outsiders*, focus on the question of Outsider Art. Just what is Outsider Art and what is its role in relation to the broader field of art and art education are discussed in these two papers. Alice Wexler's article, "Identity Politics of Disability: The Other and the Secret Self," discusses the importance of re-evaluating the distinctions made between such terms as normal and abnormal, and the unconscious assumptions that "Normals" make about the "Other." As she further writes in her abstract, "because these assumptions are played out in the arts, it might also be useful to re-evaluate the long-held division between art therapy and art education. I will give a brief background of art made in institutions, and how from them came a hybrid form of art making lying somewhere between art therapy and art education. This model has something to tell art educators who may teach inside schools or in alternative settings. The principles that make art effective, such as self-motivation, and judicious intervention, are also effective in classroom studios. This article looks at the historical bias and institutionalized discrimination of individuals with disabilities that has existed in western culture and advocates for a new paradigm and scholarship for educators. It presents two examples of artists with disabilities who have benefited from this way of making art."

jan jagodzinski also takes up the issue of Outsider Art, but for a different purpose and emphasis. Outsider art becomes a way to identify the paradox of art education itself, namely Outsider artists do not need

teachers. Further, he draws on Lacanian psychoanalysis to identify the realm of the psychic Real, which he argues is what Outside Art dramatically illustrates by way of Bataille's *informe*. His title, "In the Realm of the 'Real': Outsider Art and its Paradoxes for Art Educators," plays on the title given to the artistic oeuvre of Henry Darger by his "biographer" John McGregor—"In the Realms of the Unreal." The paradox explored here is what McGregor claims to be "Unreal" in Darger's art is just the opposite read from a Lacanian perspective. It is very "Real." Without this "unreal Real," Darger would have become psychotic.

In our last section, *The Technologies of Un(becoming)*, three papers are grouped together on the grounds that all of them explore in their own unique way the very importance of the new technologies in art education for social and political transformation. The title of this grouping also obliquely references Foucault's *Technologies of the Self* where he presents a notion of self-fashioning (*souci de soi*), as the ethical care of self that itself presents the *paradox* of technology: like fashion it can be imposed and/or freely chosen. Technologies of the self are devices—mechanical or otherwise—which make possible the social construction of personal identity. Beginning with "Visual Culture Explorations: Un/Becoming Art Educators," the collective co-authored essay by Knight, Keifer-Boyd and Amburgy utilize the Internet (as one such technology of the self) in an online dialogue between nine art educators who examine their teacher identity and the assumptions of that identity held together through their own artistic and teaching practices. Four assumptions are queried through these exchanges: 1) given the new technologies, the assumption as to whether 'real' artmaking is hands-on is decentered, 2) given the assumption that visual culture emphasizes the visual, for art educators what is to be made of the realm beyond the visual? 3) given the assumption that the Euro-

Western culture is central, how might that notion be decentered? Finally, 4) given that knowledge is transmitted by teachers, how might art teachers become aware that their own beliefs are socially constructed? The essay ends with a self-reflexive discussion on the new merits of visual culture and how it should be taught given the changed climate both in the *habitus* of art education and postindustrial societies in general.

The next essay by Alison Colman, ""Un/Becoming Digital: The Ontology of Technological Determination and its Implications for Art Education" attacks the heart of the paradox of the new computer digitalized technologies, their irreconcilable two-sidedness as both promising a vision of freedom and shared humanity, at the same time becoming an instrument of global surveillance and personal alienation. Colman's exploration of this paradox is best stated in her own words: "In this manuscript, I construct a conceptual framework from which to interrogate determinism regarding the use of digital information technology by drawing upon on the work of three contemporary philosophers of technology: Frederick Ferre (1995) Ian Barbour (1993), and Andrew Feenberg (1991). Each has explored human attitudes toward technology and devised broad categories framing these attitudes; I term these categories "technological optimists," "technological pessimists," and "technological contextualists." I use these categories to examine determinist attitudes about the Internet and the use of the Internet in contemporary classrooms. I then address the question "what does this have to do with art education?" by providing three examples of artists and artist collectives whose use of the Internet highlights information technology as a social/cultural practice as opposed to a tool. These examples include British "artivist" Heath Bunting, artist collective eToy, and telepresence artist Eduardo Kac. I conclude with suggestions for art educators how to circumvent

technological determinism when constructing a curriculum that includes the use of new and emerging technologies for art making."

Our last essay in this collection is by Sara Wilson McKay. McKay's essay "People Should Come to Work" is a provocation. It's subtitle, "Un-becoming Cartesian Subjects and Objects in Art Education" reveals her attack. It is a pleasure to read an attempt to theorize a much need post-Cartesian subject for art educators today by calling upon two metaphors—the rhizome and the cyborg, which may help us re-vision vision. We applaud McKay for engaging us in a much-needed discussion, which calls on the work of Deleuze and Guattari and those theorists who have been captured by their work. McKay is able to bridge the gap of modernism and postmodernism by calling on the democratic ideals of John Dewey into her discussion, reminding us not to lose sight of the need for democratic responsibility. Again, we leave the reader wih the author's own words as developed in her abstract. "This article calls for a reexamination of the work that artworks can do in our communities, particularly by calling into question the usual Cartesian seeing subject/seen object dichotomy, which typically results in a vicious circle of passivity—both a passive (often victimized) seen object and a passive (generally apathetic) viewer. By unpacking the connections between democracy and conflict and offering two metaphors—the rhizome and the cyborg—that can explore such connections in the art/viewer dynamic, I argue for a post-Cartesian sense of intersubjectivity that activates both viewer and art mutually through metaphoric extensions of both. The implication of such activation expands the expected role of art in our communities and draws attention to the necessary engagement by viewers in and for a democracy."

To close, this collection of authors presented here have all explored the portmanteau word un(becoming) in their own way. Some have preferred to place the stress on the (un). Others decided that the slash was more important to make their points—un/becoming. In one case a hyphen was used. Still others seemed not to demarcate the "crossing" of the two terms at all. But all have shown us that it is the paradoxical and ambiguous nature of the logic that un(becoming) presents where the truly fruitful discussions can and do emerge. In a climate of education where ambiguity and paradox is slowly eroded through the testing mania of Bush's *No Child Left Behind* for funding dollars, and the continued emphasis on instrumental relationship to knowledge so that each nation can compete globally for more profit dollars, the Social Caucus theory continues to be engaged in a "line of flight" that attempts to keep the questions in the abyss of the paradox alive. We hope that the readers of this journal will come to the same conclusion after reading this collection of essays.